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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1944

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Von Rundstedt Hurls In Big Reserves In A Desperate Attempt To Wipe Out The Strasbourg Pocket

GERMANS BATTLE TO SAVE 50,000 'DIEHD' MEN

BY OUR MILITARY COMMENTATOR

A GREAT BATTLE FLARED UP YESTERDAY TO DECIDE THE FATE OF FIELD-MARSHAL MODEL'S ARMY OF 50,000 GERMANS WHO ARE ALMOST ENCIRCLED IN THE VOSGES AND FIGHTING WITH THEIR BACKS TO THE RHINE SOUTH OF STRASBOURG. IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO RELIEVE THEM, VON RUNDSTEDT BROUGHT UP FRESH RESERVES AND HURLED THEM AGAINST THE AMERICANS ON A BROAD FRONT NORTH OF SAAREBOURG. THE FIGHTING IS BITTER.

It is a battle of the pocket similar in many respects to the disastrous German attempt in Normandy to burst a hole in the bottom of the Falaise pocket.

If von Rundstedt succeeds this time the French-American force which advanced through the Saverne Gap to Strasbourg will be cut off. If he fails the 50,000 Germans in the Vosges will be doomed.

This was the battle situation when Rundstedt made his supreme effort: From the Saverne Gap American forces were pouring reinforcements along the roads leading to Strasbourg. The city had been practically cleared of the enemy and the Americans were fanning out north and south.

To the north-west they had reached Mommehnen, 12 miles from Strasbourg. To the south they were within eight miles of the French army of General de Lattre de Tassigny, who is striking northwards along the west bank of the Rhine.

With the narrow gap between the Allied armies steadily closing, von Rundstedt struck fiercely at the neck of the American advance near Saarebourg with the object of cutting off the whole Strasbourg salient.

First news of the attack came from German sources. Guenther Weber reported from Rundstedt's headquarters: "Our forces have launched a surprise counter-attack north of Saarebourg with fresh reserves on a broad front. The initial impact has already gained considerable ground between the Saar and the Vosges."

Last-minute reports say that the counter-attack is still going well, though the Americans are offering stubborn resistance. "Five major localities have already been recaptured by the German troops, including Barendorf, Hirsland and the town of Hirsland. Our losses have been reduced to the level of the Americans coming down from the Saverne Gap, and this endangered the American position."

News of the German attack was corroborated by William Sloan, Reuters' correspondent, whose cable late last night said the German counter-attack was being well held.

The abortive assaults near Saarebourg were no more than the fighting at Strasbourg with the German artillery fire, he said. "The first spell of comparatively easy success has been followed by a hard and bitter fight, and the Americans are fighting in the Vosges."

The French forces in the Vosges have been heavily hit by a deluge of rain but they have cleared out the town of Hirsland and are fighting in the Vosges. "The battle of attrition is still going on."

"The battle of attrition is still going on. North of Mulhouse, however, German resistance is stiffening. All along the rest of the Western Front the British and Americans have been methodically pushing ahead—without gaining much ground—by the use of heavy manpower and equipment and the time weakening the enemy's hold."

The danger of this process to the German war effort is obvious. The present tactical situation, it is stated, "is the greatest battle of attrition of this war, or of all wars."

"The enemy is arraying all his arms to overrun our defence wall in an unbroken mass onslaught."

British Second Army: Another 2,000 yards advance through quagmire, and minefields has been made. The advance is to be made within two miles from the German-Dutch border of Venlo.

On the Rhine, the British are now against the final German defence line. Little opposition is being met, but when the Germans do resist they fight to the last man. South of Rotterdam our troops are today, it is said, are living a house-top existence.

U.S. Ninth Army: Striking at dawn towards the Roer river barrier. Gen. Simpson's forces captured the Roer river bridge south-west of Juelich. Fighting is also taking place in Kottar two miles to the west of Juelich.

On this narrow sector covering the approaches to the Roer von Rundstedt has thrown in ten infantry divisions and two armoured divisions. The pocket in the ancient capital of Aachen is being mopped up.

"DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS"



2,000 Planes Flung Over SMASHING BLOW AT NAZI OIL

WATCHED BY crowds in the streets of London and South Coast towns, one of the mightiest air armadas seen for some time streamed over the Straits towards France yesterday.

'WE FIGHT FOR TERMS'—GOEBBELS

For the first time Goebbels has made a direct statement that Germany is fighting on in the hope of settling lenient peace terms.

Speaking at a rally of German men and women yesterday, he said he had a message from Hitler to convey to them.

It expressed appreciation of their effort, and Goebbels added: "We will fight until the enemy is ready to offer us decent peace terms."

The heavy bombers were escorted by fighters, more than 1,000 Thunderbolts, Mustangs and Lightnings of U.S. Eighth and Ninth Air Forces, which went down to strafe ground targets.

Mitchells and Mustangs of RAF Second T.A.F. attacked the railway yards at Rheinfelden, in Western Germany. This target, less than 12 miles ahead of the front line at Gelsenkirchen, is the biggest rail junction in that area, and is of vital importance to the advancing troops.

And late last night, RAF bombers roared out across the Straits of Dover in the direction of Calais, where nearly 10,000 munitions the procession continued.

U.S. Forces, 11,859,000

Washington, Saturday. THE approximate strength of the U.S. Armed Forces on October 1, 1944, was 11,859,000, Maj-Gen. Louis B. Hershey, Director of Selective Service System, says in a report to the U.S. Senate Military Affairs Committee.

The Army numbered about 7,000,000. The figures, Gen. Hershey explained, included men in unactivated mass onslaught.

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"DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS"

THE first real clash of armour in Italy for the past few months has ended in a severe defeat for the enemy's prize 26th Panzer Division in a tank battle which began on Wednesday and raged for three days.

The German Command threw every available tank and armoured weapon into the battle to save the town of Faenza, but the enemy tanks beat a hasty retreat yesterday, leaving many men and vehicles behind.

The spell of good weather held, by an unusual stroke of good fortune, and General Keightley has dealt a knock-out blow to a crack German division.

The 26th had been held in reserve for some time by the German Command to be used in a decisive battle. Its strength had not been known to the British corps. At first it was expected that it would be used to make an all-out stand before Forlì, but the capture of that city was too much for it, and it was ordered to move up an entire division in time.

ALL AVAILABLE TANKS Now it has been used to defend Faenza—and soundly beaten. It was supported by all available tanks, and it made a determined attempt to prevent the breakthrough.

But last night, after more than 300 prisoners had been taken and many enemy tanks destroyed, the Germans were forced to withdraw last night.

Our troops, with tank support, then fanned out from the bridge-heads in two main attacks, and have entered the outskirts of Faenza, an important centre on the Rimini-Bologna road. On the left of the British, Polish troops also made a considerable advance—Exchange.

SUNNY ITALY The estimated 27,794 "fall" normal rainfall—547 inches—down in 10 hours on the Italian front during the night of October 21, in an attempt to gain a vantage point near the E.N.S.A. bridge.

A struggle followed and shots rang out. The German armor opened fire and a machine-gun on the terrace of the British, Polish troops also made a considerable advance—Exchange.

The official explanation of this activity was that another hammer blow was being dealt to Germany's dwindling oil supplies.

No sooner had one group of planes passed over the coast than another appeared in sight. In some of the groups there were over 100 planes.

A communiqué from Eighth Air Force H.Q., stated that more than 2,000 Flying Fortresses and Liberators had attacked synthetic oil plants at Leuna, Lautendorf and Merseburg, and oil storage facilities and marshalling yards at Bingen, east of Mainz.

The heavy bombers were escorted by fighters, more than 1,000 Thunderbolts, Mustangs and Lightnings of U.S. Eighth and Ninth Air Forces, which went down to strafe ground targets.

Mitchells and Mustangs of RAF Second T.A.F. attacked the railway yards at Rheinfelden, in Western Germany. This target, less than 12 miles ahead of the front line at Gelsenkirchen, is the biggest rail junction in that area, and is of vital importance to the advancing troops.

And late last night, RAF bombers roared out across the Straits of Dover in the direction of Calais, where nearly 10,000 munitions the procession continued.

Himmler's Bid To Save Nazi Criminals

HIMMLER, in a bid to save Nazi war criminals from Allied retaliation, is "warning" the ranks of the armed S.S. in Germany, German army papers, the same step in the Nazi Party by diluting its organization with "deserving" ex-Servicemen.

It is some time past the armed S.S. has come to rest exclusively on volunteers and has been given first of all the conscripted young men.

Underground reports from Germany give detailed instances of men from other branches of the Wehrmacht who were suddenly transferred to the S.S. and given such specific S.S. duties as the guarding of concentration camps.

The new decree lifting the ban on Nazi Party membership for the armed forces is being exploited for the same purpose.

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BRITISH TRIUMPH IN 3-DAY BATTLE

Army Routs Crack Panzers

From PETER LESSING, Rome, Saturday.

THE first real clash of armour in Italy for the past few months has ended in a severe defeat for the enemy's prize 26th Panzer Division in a tank battle which began on Wednesday and raged for three days.

Enemy Admit Hatvan Is Lost

RUSSIANS SPLIT NAZI FORCES

THE Russians have achieved their aim of splitting off the Germans in Hungary from those in Czechoslovakia and those in North-Eastern Hungary from Budapest.

Big Brussels Clash: Many Injured

From DENNIS MARTIN, Reuters' Special Correspondent

Brussels, Saturday. WHEN thousands of political demonstrators clashed with the police in Brussels yesterday an E.N.S.A. Garrison Theatre was turned into a casualty clearing station for wounded.

As a large procession of demonstrators reached the area dispersed part of the crowd. A number of them broke through a cordon of police armed with tommy-guns and rifles, in an attempt to gain a vantage point near the E.N.S.A. bridge.

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Airmen Killed Saving A City

CITIZENS at Norwich on Friday night saw the bomber of an American bomber which appeared to be in difficulties make every effort to avoid crashing on a building up area.

First broke out the tower of St. Philip's Church, losing a wing, and then crashed into an open space near a corporation depot half a mile farther on.

The crew of the bomber were killed, but no civilians were injured.

16 ARRESTS IN HAIFA

Sixteen known or suspected members of a national military organisation were arrested in two police raids at Haifa yesterday, and an official statement issued in Jerusalem.

It is now our duty as well as it is right to offer our help. We are in the position of not want it somebody comes to us with an order."

The reason officially given for the appeal to soldiers to join the Nazi Party is the shortage of skilled personnel and the need to reinforce the party's authority at a time when the vital task of maintaining the organisation of the home front is becoming increasingly difficult.

Helping Norway: A 'Warlike' Measure

Training on Swedish soil of Swedish volunteers to fight the Germans in Norway was described as a "military and warlike measure" against the German Reich by a Wilhelmstrasse spokesman yesterday.

This is clearly understood in Sweden, the spokesman declared, and advised that Swedish volunteers should be trained in Sweden on Free Norwegian territory, "and this is not in violation of any such treaty exists"—A.P.

Hankow Waterfront Bombed

Liberators of the United States Fourteenth Air Force bombed the Hankow waterfront and Samah Bay installations on Hainan Island, it was announced at Chungking yesterday.—B.U.P.

SWISS T.U.C. PRESIDENT

Head of the Swiss T.U.C. has arrived in London to take part in the meeting of the executive of the International Transport Workers' Federation.

40 p.c. Lag In Arms Production

L A shortage of five big American trucks used by New Orleans by Mr. William Green, President of the American Federation of Labour, to consider plans for organising men into crime syndicates owing to the short shortage of labour in production of vehicles needed arms—particularly heavy shells and motorised armoured vehicles—is estimated at 40 per cent.

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